



U.S. Department of Justice

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, May 13, 2011

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### **Man Pleads Guilty to 11 Bank Robberies And One Attempted Bank Robbery - Admits Taking Part in 16-Month Robbery Spree -**

WASHINGTON - Jerome Thomas, 64, of Washington, D.C. pled guilty today to 11 counts of bank robbery and one count of attempted bank robbery for a string of brazen daytime crimes committed over a 16-month period, announced U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

The guilty plea took place before the Honorable James E. Boasberg in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The government's evidence proved that Thomas engaged in a long-running robbery spree that netted more than \$20,000. Each time he robbed a bank, Thomas claimed that he had a gun or a pipe bomb, although no weapon or device was actually seen.

Thomas's sentencing is scheduled for August 25, 2011. He faces up to 20 years in prison for each robbery. Under the plea agreement, he also will be ordered to pay \$21,101 in restitution. Thomas has been in custody since his arrest in the aftermath of a bank robbery in March 2011.

According to the government's evidence, Thomas was responsible for a large share of bank robberies committed in Washington, D.C. during the time-frame of his crimes. The robberies were investigated by the FBI/MPD Violent Crimes Task Force, which sought the public's help in identifying a suspect. A tip from a concerned citizen led law enforcement to suspect Thomas.

The robberies typically took place in the late morning or early afternoon, with Thomas handing a teller a note making demands and threats, such as: "I Have a gun in my hand and 2 pipe bombs in my bag give me a stack of 100's and 50's and no one gets hurt." He typically took the money and fled on foot, leaving the note behind. No one was hurt in the incidents.

"This case proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that crime does not pay," said U.S. Attorney Machen. "In nearly a dozen bank robberies, this prolific bank robber netted just \$22,000. For all

his efforts to evade detection, the FBI and MPD tracked him down. And today, the U.S. Attorney's Office secured his guilty plea, setting the stage for his incarceration in federal prison."

"Mr. Thomas repeatedly placed innocent victims in fear for their lives and will pay the price with time behind bars," said Assistant Director McJunkin. "I am proud of the work our task force does daily to makes the streets of Washington and Virginia a safer place for people to work and live."

"This is another example of how invaluable these tips can be to the police department," said Chief Lanier. "We want to continue to urge people to come forward when they have information regarding crime in our neighborhoods."

In court today, Thomas pled guilty to taking part in the following crimes:

- **November 23, 2009:** Robbery of a Chevy Chase Bank in the 300 block of Pennsylvania Avenue SE.
- **January 6, 2010:** Robbery of a Chevy Chase Bank in the 1200 block of Pennsylvania Avenue NW.
- **March 8, 2010:** Robbery of a Chevy Chase Bank in the 600 block of F Street NW.
- **March 12, 2010:** Robbery of a PNC Bank in the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue SE.
- **March 25, 2010:** Robbery of a Chevy Chase Bank in the 1200 block of F Street NW.
- **April 21, 2010:** Robbery of a Chevy Chase Bank in the 700 block of Pennsylvania Avenue NW.
- **April 26, 2010:** Robbery of a Chevy Chase Bank in the 900 block of 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW.
- **May 11, 2010:** Robbery of a PNC Bank in the 1100 block of H Street NW.
- **May 18, 2010:** Attempted robbery of a PNC Bank in the 1900 block of Massachusetts Avenue NW.
- **January 12, 2011:** Robbery of a Capital One Bank in the 1200 block of F Street NW.
- **January 18, 2011:** Robbery of a PNC Bank in the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue SE.
- **March 16, 2011:** Robbery of a SunTrust Bank in the 1100 block of G Street NW.

The citizen's tip proved invaluable to law enforcement, which reviewed surveillance photos from the March 16, 2011 robbery in which the robber's face was clearly visible. Several law enforcement personnel thought the individual in the photos resembled Thomas.

Shortly after the March 16, 2011 robbery, law enforcement responded to Thomas's home in Southeast Washington to conduct surveillance. About 7 that evening, Thomas arrived at the parking lot of his residence, and he was wearing clothing and jewelry seen in the bank robbery surveillance photos. He also had in his possession about \$1,891.

Thomas was transported to MPD, where he was interviewed by law enforcement. When confronted with evidence from the string of robberies, Thomas admitted to each one.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Director McJunkin, and Chief Lanier commended the exceptional investigative work of the FBI/MPD Violent Crimes Task Force, including the Special Agents from the FBI and MPD Detective Elmer Baylor, Jr.

They also thanked those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Legal Assistant LaToya Wade and Paralegal Sam Reisen, who provided administrative support, and Assistant United States Attorney Christopher Dana, who assisted with asset forfeiture issues. Lastly, they praised Assistant U.S. Attorney Catherine K. Connelly, who is prosecuting this matter.

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